

*Observations on an antique Marble of the Earl of
Pembroke; by the Rev. Mr. Pegge.*

Read at the Society of ANTIQUARIES JAN. 7, 1768.

AT Lord Pembroke's seat at Wilton, there is a very antient altar of Bacchus, of more consequence than vulgarly imagined. The inscription, which ends in a circle round it (for so Mr. Cowdry describes it, p. 116.) runs thus:

ΜΕΛΛΟΜΕΝ·ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΝ ΑΓΛΑΟΜΟΡΦΟΝ·
ΒΑΚΧΕΥΤΟΡΑ ΞΑΝΘΟΚΑΡΕΝΟΝ

Μελλόμεν Διονυσον, Αγλαομορφον, Βαχχευτορα, Ξανθοκαρενον.

Canamus Dionysium, pulchriformem, Bachatorem, flavicomum.

THIS marble and inscription are unquestionably very old, as I judge both from the form of the letters, and there being no appearance of the four last invented letters of the Greek alphabet.

THE



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THE form of the letters is much like those of the Sigeian inscription published by Dr. Chishull [a], and of those on the pedestal of the Colossus at Delos, which may be seen in Dr. Shuckford [b].

THE last invented letters are, Η, Ω, Ε, Ψ, none of which are found here; whereas the aspirated letters of Palamedes, Φ, Χ, Ξ, Θ [c], do all of them occur.

I WOULD not rest the antiquity of this altar solely on the Epsilon's being used for Eta, as is done in the description; that, I think, being too precarious, since, by an accidental continuance of the ancient custom, that will sometimes prevail on later marbles [d]; but on the antique figure of the letters, in conjunction with the orthography. The orthography depends upon the Omicron's being used for Omega, as much as on the Epsilon's being put for Eta; for the conjecture in Mr. Cowdry is right as to the word Μάλπωμεν, which is here undoubtedly intended for Μάλπωμεν [e], for the epigram on Bacchus in the Anthologia [f] begins with that word. And as that epigram includes the several names of Bacchus, being compiled for that purpose; 'tis well worth remarking, that his four names upon the altar, Διώνυσος, Ἀγλαΐμορφος, Βαχχέυτης, and Ξανθοκάρως, are all of them found there. But what is of greater weight with me is the Ξ, the ancient character of ξ [g]. Simonides was the person, according to Salmassius [h], that invented the long vowels Η and Ω; as

[a] Chishull, *Inscript. Asiatic.*

[b] Shuckford's *Connection*, vol. 1. p. 259.

[c] Salmassius, *Inscript. vet. explicat.* p. 47. edit. Crenii.

[d] Dr. Taylor's *Commentar.* ad Marmor. Sandvic. p. 6, 7.

[e] Mr. Cowdry's book, cited above.

[f] *Anthologia Græca*, p. 82. edit. Brodæci.

[g] Seldeni *Comment.* ad Marm. Arundel. p. 120. edit. Maittaire. This character is not found in the Sigeian inscription, as Dr. Shuckford alleges, p. 256. yet it is in Dr. Chishull's alphabet, p. 3.

[h] Salmassius, loco citat.

likewise

likewise the Double Letters, by which, as contradistinguished to the Literae Densae, which are added to the alphabet by Palamedes, are meant Ξ and Ψ [i]. The Ξ was therefore invented by Palamedes, and the Ψ by Simonides; and consequently, since the Ξ occurs not upon the altar, but Ξ is used instead of it, we must conclude it to be older than the age of Simonides, but more recent than that of Palamedes. Before the Ξ was devised, Ξ would be put for it, these two letters being so readily counter-changed [k]. Now, from these three notes, E for H, O for Ω , and Ξ for Σ , when considered together, I think, we may safely conjecture somewhat of the age of the marble, though it would not be so safe to do it from one of them singly. H, Ω , and Σ , were all of the invention of Simonides, who was born Olymp. LV. 4, and died Olymp. LXXVIII [l]. Wherefore, as the marble must be older than he, and many years for aught we know, the lowest date we can assign it must be Olymp. L. which answers to the year before Christ 578 [m]. Whereupon I observe, that the punctuation with two dots is also ancient, and conformable to the time here mentioned [n], and that this is far the oldest Greek inscription in England, and probably the oldest extant any where else, unless perhaps you will except the Sigeon.

'Tis generally agreed, that the first compositions were in verse; and I incline to believe, that the inscription is part of some old hymn composed in honor of that God. Nothing less seems to be implied by the word Μέλπομεν , which has no relation to an altar, otherwise than by accommodation, the altar-style being very different from this. However, it is applied properly enough to the sacred stone, since the sacrifices were usually attended with

[i] Salmassius, *ibid.*

[k] Maittaire *Marm.* Oxon. p. 563.

[l] Fabric. *Bibl. Graec.* Tom. I. 591.

[m] Helvici *Chronologia.*

[n] Chishull, p. 14.

music,

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music, voices and hymns. It may be reduced into metre in this manner:

—————Μέλπωμεν Διόνυσον,

Ἀγλαέμορφον, Βακχεύτορα, Ξανθοκάρμυον.

For though the word Ἀγλαός has generally the middle syllable short, and is so used in the Anthologia in the place above cited, and in the next epigram, and in Homer, where we have

—ἀγλαόν ἄλσος.

—ἀγλαος ἦος.

—ἀγλααί τίκτω.

yet this does not hinder but that a rude hymnographer might take the liberty of producing that syllable in those early ages, when this composition is supposed to be made; and the insertion of the Aeolic Digamma, thus ἀγλαυός, or ἀγλαφός, which Bishop Stillingfleet says is always done when two vowels meet [ο], would contribute to make it more easy and current [ρ].

THE Sigma in this inscription has something peculiar in it, thus, Σ; a form that does not often occur on the marbles. The Sigeian inscription gives it the contrary way ς; which is owing, no doubt, to the unsettled way of writing in those times amongst the Greeks, sometimes from right to left, after the manner of

[σ] Stillingfleet, Orig. Sacr. p. 384. See also Grot. de Verit. p. 52.

[ρ] In reading this ingenious letter to the Society, I made the curious observation, which I here beg leave to subjoin. There is a similar word, I mean ἄλσος, whose middle syllable is used both long and short by Homer. Comp. Od. ο. 195. and κ. 493. The reason of it is, that λσ in ἄλσος is naturally long; but poetically shortened by preceding another vowel; but I never met with the second α long in ἀγλαυός, not even in the hymns (said to be) of Orpheus, in their corrupt state: And were we to allow it produced by the insertion of the Aeolic Digamma, without inserting another after ἑμυρία, I cannot see the propriety of making this syllable also long; unless the μ, being a liquid, has the power of lengthening a short syllable, as some grammarians maintain; with whom I cannot readily join hands, because this liberty would render metre very precarious, and the addition of α and ω to the alphabet by Simonides almost useless. I should chuse, therefore, rather to let the inscription stand as it does, than begin with μέλπωμεν in the middle of a verse; and draw ἀγλαέμορφον into five long syllables. T. M.

the

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 the Asiatics; sometimes from left to right, as we now do; and
 sometimes both ways intermixed [g]. Our character much re-
 sembles the imperfect ζ , of which Scaliger speaks [r], and which
 gave occasion to those rounder figures on Herod's pillar ζ ,
 which seem naturally to be deduced from this angular antient
 form.

THE R is of two sorts. That which has the tail is rare, it
 approaching nearly to the Roman form [s]. However, both are
 to be met with on Herod's pillar in Dr. Chishull; and as the R
 seems to have been in use amongst the Ionians, from them the
 Latins probably took it [t].

BUT what is most remarkable is the Lambda, thus, λ , which
 I believe to be entirely different from all others hitherto seen; at
 least, there is nothing like it in Scaliger, or Chishull, nor, as I
 remember, in Montfaucon [u]. 'Tis evidently the Hebrew
 Lamed λ , and is a further proof that the Greek letters were
 brought from the East, as Dr. Shuckford and others justly
 maintain, and withall is a great confirmation of the high anti-
 quity of this venerable remain.

IT is pretty remarkable, and very fortunate, that these few
 words (not more than five) contain the whole Greek alphabet,
 as it stood at that time.

HAVING had occasion to recur to Dr. Shuckford's Connection,
 amongst other authors, for the elucidation of this curious rem-
 nant of antiquity, I could not avoid discovering a pleasant mis-

[g] Dr. Shuckford's Connection, vol. I. p. 256, 257.

[r] Scaliger's Animadvers. on Eusebius, p. 110 and 116.

[t] Montfaucon, in the *Diar. Ital.* p. 55, draws an argument from this form of the
 R, to prove that the famous gospel of Saint Mark at Venice is in Latin; and I am
 of opinion, that, though we see the Canine letter in this shape on this marble, his
 argumentation is not the less conclusive, by reason, that in the fourth or fifth cen-
 tury the P was the established and general character.

[s] Chishull, p. 11.

[u] Palaeographia Graeca.

take

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take of the Doctor's, in relation to the Theban Tripods, with which I shall conclude these remarks. The case is thus: In the fifth book of Herodotus[w], there are three inscriptions, which the author tells us he saw written in Cadmean letters on as many tripods at Thebes. These inscriptions, however, are printed in the author, in the common Greek character. Afterwards Scaliger, in his digression on the antient Greek letters, in his animadversions on Eusebius, thought fit to exemplify them, for the illustration of the subject he was upon, in the antient Ionic character, from his own invention; and the learned Doctor[x] has been pleased to take Scaliger's imagination for a reality, as if the tripods had been then extant, and Scaliger had procured transcripts of them from Thebes, and to argue from the figures of the letters, as genuine and authentic monuments of antiquity. He has unwarily imposed upon many of his readers, no doubt; however, he has made Scaliger some amends for the trick Muretus formerly put upon him; Scaliger took some verses of Muretus for a fragment of the Latin poet Tra-bea[y]; and the Doctor, in return, has taken Scaliger's fancies for real inscriptions.

[w] Herodotus, p. 307. edit. Gronov.

[x] Shuckford's Connect. vol. I. p. 258, in not. p. 261. in not. p. 263. and 265.

[y] Fabric. Bibl. Lat. Tom. I. p. 670.

